

Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting Information Meeting
Portland Harbor Superfund Site
Tuesday, March 25, 2002

An informational meeting, hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), was held to provide interested members of the community information about forming a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAG) for the Portland Harbor Superfund site.

Attendees: M. McClellan, NW Health Foundation; Kim Cox, Oregon DEQ; Tom Chisholm; Laura Hunter, Willamette-Riverkeeper; DeWayne Bey; Travis Williams, Willamette Riverkeeper; Joe Coffman, Willamette-Riverkeeper; Jane Haley, Oregon Center for Environmental Health; Joe Keating, OCEH; Katy Brooks, Port of Portland; Jim Robison; Liz Callison; Ruth Ha; Janice Panichello, Oregon Department of Health Services; Jacque Day-Calder; Barbara Smith, Lower Willamette Group; John Vlastelicia; Jan Morgan, NW Health Foundation; MJ Bey, League of Women Voters of Portland; Joan Saroka, City of Portland; Joe Smith; Dianne Wyeni; David E. Lyons; Judy Smith, EPA

(Compiled and edited by Judy Smith from notes taken by Kim Cox and Katy Brooks)

Citizen Advisory Groups:

- CAGS are often formed in community's that have Superfund sites. There are over 60 CAG's throughout the country.
- EPA can not form or run a CAG, CAGs are formed by local citizens
- CAGs provide a forum for the community to air issues and concerns, provides information to EPA project managers who are leading the cleanup
- Successful CAGs are initiated by the interested community, represent a wide spectrum of the community, and act as liaison between the community and EPA
- EPA's legal requirements for providing opportunities for public involvement are not until investigations are completed –and a plan for cleanup is developed. EPA has learned that this is too late in the process and considers early public involvement to be critical.
- A CAG can provide advice to EPA, but EPA is not required to use the CAG's recommendations.

Characteristics of CAG's:

1. Must be community formed
2. Provides personal views as well as perspective of the groups each individual represents
3. CAG is a forum for participation
4. CAG is representative of the community and inclusive
5. The group must have a consistent liaison with the EPA, trustees, etc.

Next Meeting

Joe Keating, Oregon Center for Environmental Health, and Travis Williams, Willamette Riverkeeper, agreed to work together on arranging the next meeting. A tentative date of Tuesday, April 16 at 7:00 was suggested. Travis and Joe will get information out to attendees of the March 26 meeting and others in the community that may be interested.

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Questions from Attendees

Q - How is this CAG different than the CAG that was formed for the McCormick and Baxter site
A - McCormick and Baxter is a Superfund site located with the Portland Harbor Superfund site. The CAG that was formed for McCormick and Baxter was focused only on that individual site. This new CAG will focus on this new Superfund site

Q - What support, technical or clerical, does EPA provide?
A - EPA can not provide direct financial support to the CAG. However, EPA can provide meeting support, such as facilitating meetings, setting up meetings, taking notes, helping with mailing and copying

Q - Are meetings between the EPA and the Lower Willamette Group open to the public?
A – Technical discussions about work in progress between the Lower Willamette Group and EPA are not open to the public. The Lower Willamette Group must submit all completed work to EPA and DEQ in writing for review and approval. There will be public meetings and opportunity for public review of EPA/DEQ reviewed documents later this spring.

Q - Can a CAG be used to lobby?
A – No. A CAG should not be used for lobbying, since they represent diverse community interests. However, the CAG is encouraged to develop consensus on issues and concerns related to community needs and issues for the investigation and cleanup

Q - What is expected for a CAG ? How should it be operated?
A - The mission, operating guidelines and membership are ultimately determined by the CAG participants. EPA can provide suggestions, but the CAG members are the ones who make operational decisions.

Q - Who has ultimate decision making authority in the project?
A - EPA must make the final decisions regarding cleanup, which will be documented in a Record of Decision. However EPA understands that their decisions must be responsive to the issues, concerns and recommendations from other state and federal agencies, tribes, and the community.

Q - What is the purpose of the CAG?
A - Provides a focal point for the community to learn about the project, provide community representation on the project and provide EPA input.

Q - What is the role of the CAG in providing information to the community?
A - The role of the CAG is critical in acting as the midpoint between the community at large and the government agencies.

Q - How do documents get provided to the CAG?
A - That's one of the operational issues that can be worked out as the CAG figures out how it operates. EPA can provide EPA/DEQ reviewed documents to the CAG for its review.

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Q - Can members of the group be floating? Does the group have to incorporate?

A - Again, these are questions to be answered by the CAG as the group determines how it wants to operate. Being able to understand the cleanup process and accompanying technical issues will take a time commitment, and floating members may be at a disadvantage with less consistent participation

Q -Is it appropriate for TAG funds to be used towards a CAG

A - Yes, if it is consistent with the plan of work identified in the proposal written by the TAG grantee. Travis Williams of Willamette Riverkeeper is willing to participate and support the effort to form a CAG.

Q -What is the geographic area covered by a CAG?

A -For Portland Harbor it would be for Portland metropolitan area or people with an interest in the area of the Superfund site.

Q - Is there a statutory basis for a CAG?

A - No. (A helpful resource is "A Community Advisory Group: Your Voice in EPA Decisions and Superfund and Other Hazardous Waste Sites (EPA540-F-01-002)

Q - What needs to be provided to EPA informing you that we want to start a CAG?

A - There is no formal documentation required. EPA will work in cooperation with groups interested in forming a CAG to help make sure the group is productive for both the community and the project.

Q - Have PRP's provided funds for CAG's at other sites?

A - Yes - If it is offered, the CAG must determine whether they would want to accept funding offered by potentially responsible parties.

Q - How can CAG get special interests into the EPA process if they feel they are not being heard?

A - There will be many public involvement opportunities in addition to the CAG such as meetings, open houses, mailing lists, and news releases to name a few. Willamette Riverkeeper will also be a resource for technical information as the Technical Assistance grantee.

Q- Several questions regarding how the group will give input, have influence, the flow of information and how their input would be used.

A - EPA and DEQ will work in cooperation with the CAG to make sure mutual goals are achieved.

Q - What should the structure of the group be?

A - There are guidelines and a "toolkit" available from EPA that include suggestions for structure, formation, composition, funding, responsibility, authority, duration of the group. The EPA also has information on the steps in initial formation and lessons learned. Copies were handed out at the meeting.